centre. The estimated average annual expenditure of this training centre is to the tune of Rs. 1.00 crore. The National Horticulture Board has not received any proposal/request from the Government of Maharashtra for grant of assistance towards meeting annual expenditure of Rs. 1.00 crore, for HTC, Pune.

Release mechanism for sugar

*99. SHRIMATI PREMA CARIAPPA:
SHRI MOTILAL VORA:

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to do away with the release mechanism for sugar;

(b) whether Government have studied the repercussions of this porposal which would lead to a rise in hoarding activities and an unprecedented rise in the sugar prices; and

(c) if so, the steps proposed by Government to save the common people from this situation?

THE MINISTER OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) to (c) Government has not so far taken a decision to do away with the release mechanism for freesale sugar. All aspects including availability of sugar at reasonable prices to the consumers shall be considered while taking decision at appropriate time on release mechanism for freesale sugar.

Procurement of foodgrains

*100. SHRIMATI S.G. INDIRA: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that procurement of foodgrains had been affected due to private trade during this year;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is also a fact that Government are considering to import foodgrains to meet the demand during this year; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) and (b) Procurement of rice has been 232.7 lakh tonnes in Kharif Marketing Season 2004-05 (upto 22.7.2005) compared to 220.2 lakh tonnes in the corresponding period last year. Thus, there has been no shortfall in procurement of rice by Government agencies in the current year. However, in respect of wheat, there has been a shortfall of approximately 20 lakh tonnes. Procurement of wheat in Rabi Marketing Season 2005-06 has been 147.9 lakh tonnes compared to 167.9 lakh tonnes last year. Increased participation by private trade may be one of the reasons for lower procurement of wheat by the Government agencies this year.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO UNSTARRED QUESTIONS

Promoting organic farming

489. SHRI R.S. GAVAI:

SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India is lagging behind in expanding organic farming despite being placed in an advantageous position;

(b) whether it is also a fact that despite allocating considerable funds for National Programme for Organic Production in the current plan, the organic sector lags far behind its actual potential;

(c) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(d) the steps the Government propose to take to promote organic farming in the country and also to achieve the targets set out in the plan?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) There is no specific allocation of funds under National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) under Ministry of Commerce.